

Programme Declarations of the Government of the Slovak Republic

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I. PREFACE

The Government of the Slovak Republic, formed on the basis of September's elections, appears before the National Council of the Slovak Republic and its electorate with a programme springing from the mandate given it by the voters of this country. This is a programme for the national renewal of Slovakia.

This mandate is the expression of the will for a change in social relations in Slovakia. Two-thirds of the voters have decided that our country needs a new beginning. The new Government would express its gratitude to the preceding regime for all the good and positive actions it has performed for our homeland. At the same time however it is necessary to underline that it is handing over the country in a situation that is worse than when it took it over.

The incoming Government of the Slovak Republic is prepared to bring a principled change to public life in our country. It desires to regain the trust of the citizens in their representatives and in their own abilities, strengths and possibilities.

The Government's Programme is one of national renewal. Great tasks stand before the Government, and before the whole of society. Such national renewal demands huge risks and energy. The basis of this process is a renewal of the functioning of state democratic institutions. State and public civil organizations must operate in the interests of the public good, must act for everyone and not only for a selected political and economic social group. The Government will do all necessary to rid our society of the plague of clientism and corruption.

A modernization of the functioning of the democratic state is a precondition for economic modernization. An equality of opportunity and responsibility in treating the national wealth is the basic condition for its further growth. It is also a condition of re-establishing and ensuring social justice.

A primary goal in the change for the better of social relationships in our country is a breaking of the circle of international isolation into which Slovakia has fallen over past years. The Government begins from its faith in the strength of our country and its capacity to hold its own in political, economic and spiritual competition on a European and world level, to the benefit of all the citizens of our country.

The Government of the Slovak Republic comes forward with a programme which has as its ambition to bring Slovakia into the new millennium in such a way that it becomes a land which we will not only love because it is our homeland but as a country of which we will be proud, of its results and its position in the family of nations, in Europe and in the world. And above all - that it become a stable country in which the inhabitants will live well. This is the programme according to which our Government will perform.

II. BASIC GOALS

The Government of the Slovak Republic presents to the National Council of the Slovak Republic and to the country's citizens its programme, the road to fulfilling these basic goals:

- to bring to the life of the whole society an effort towards respect for life, justice, freedom, responsibility, solidarity, Government law, respect for the division of powers, support for the initiatives and activities of the people, against greed, self-indulgence, corruption, the cult of power, irresponsibility and tendencies towards the concentration of power and wealth.
- to halt the economic fall and to stabilize the economy.
- to create conditions for a rise in the population's living standard.
- to build the competitiveness of the market economy.
- to ensure the protection of life, health and property of the citizenry, its long-term development and environment
- to spread the civil society on all sides.
- to gain membership in the O.E.C.D., to place Slovakia among the first wave of candidates for a widened European Union, and to gain full membership for the Slovak Republic in NATO.

III. STARTING SITUATION

The Government accepts responsibility for the development of the country in a complex period. This is characterized by the difficult situation in the economy, the growth of organized crime, the fall in consciousness of law, and unresolved problems in all sectors of life. The annual deficit in the state budget has exhausted possibilities for its further financing. Ratings of the Slovak economy have worsened, total gross foreign debt has grown, the possibility of obtaining further loans has shrunk. High interest rates prevent the development of private business and of serious enterprising. A continuingly high negative account in the foreign trade balance has caused unbearable pressure on currency stability. The increase in tension in many Slovak companies which are unable to find markets for their products or to settle their debts has brought about the threat of mass layoffs. Many privatizing entities have been unable to develop businesses acquired on the cheap, many of these have been financially undermined. There is a lack of money for education, health care, public transport and other areas. Bureaucracy and corruption have grown, relations between public administrations and the business community have become dominated by clientism. Possibilities of obtaining flats have markedly deteriorated, particularly for young families. The Government has inherited a number of uninvestigated criminal acts where suspects are members of state bodies. The former Government did not respect decisions by the Supreme Court, thus deforming the legal consciousness of the population. Society is divided, while a basic criterion of the divisiveness has been political favouritism, hatred, abuse of power and fear have become distinguishing features of interpersonal relations. Morality, ethics and responsibility have been disappearing from the life of the society.

The Government will undertake an inventory of society and present a report on its state to the citizenry. Despite the unfavourable state of society, it will take full responsibility for the future development of the country. It follows from this, that a decisive majority of its citizens have clearly realized the untenability of its development up to the present, and in the parliamentary elections pronounced themselves for a principled change in the development of the society. The Government of the Slovak Republic has dedicated itself to actualizing this change.

IV. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME:

1. Democratic legal state

One of the basic goals which the Government will follow is that of an approach to the path of a society of education, sharing and solidarity, to a society of the 21st century. The Government fully realizes that it can attain this goal only with the active participation and cooperation of all the people of the Slovak Republic.

A democratic legal state is understood by the Government as a state which in its legal procedures and the true upholding thereof grants to all citizens and legal entities equal access to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and ratified agreements on human rights, a state which is unconditionally bound by law, which serves its inhabitants and provides them with the assurance of free decisionmaking on their present and their future. For us, this is a state where the following values hold the central position: Freedom, equality, justice, democracy, tolerance and above all solidarity with the weak, the threatened, the defenceless.

Together we must create a legal framework which will not permit the creation of various forms of persecution, unemployment and exclusion of large groups of citizens from a civilized environment. The goal of this Government therefore is the humanization of societal relations, the establishment of such changes as will allow for the deepening of the social dimension of transformation and democracy as guarantees of the free self-determination of the citizenry.

We consider an immediate attack on economic criminality as one of the basic tasks, against a spread of organized criminality to further societal structures. This Government is decided, by use of available funds, to improve the operation of the justice network and to support this with legislative proposals for its overall effectiveness.

In the area of formation and application of law, the Government sees as a chief priority a strengthening of the legal consciousness by the tabling of truly constraining laws. One of the chief reasons for the present unwell condition is a non-systematic and unclear legal procedure which allows a variety of adventurers to take advantage of its gaps. Similarly unacceptable are delays in court proceedings, resulting in a lack of trust in law and order on the part of the citizen. Therefore, this Government has decided to undertake several measures leading to a fundamental change in the present situation. This primarily encompasses the following steps:

- In the very conception of the creation of law, the Government will give precedence to a systematic approach. The basis of its application is seen by the Government as a need to rework the basic civil law and sentencing codexes in such a way that their adoption will remove obstacles to the process of a complete harmonization of legal procedure.
- The Government will enact necessary legislative and organizational measures in relation to shortcomings in the legal regulation of privatization, enterprising and dealing with state property.
- The Government will create conditions for an analysis of the effective enforcement of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. In this context, the Government will use its term in office on the preparation and debating of proposals for changes to the Constitution. Their aim will be to strengthen the position of the citizen as the source of all state power, to safeguard

mechanisms for the protection of the Constitution, deepen and widen the possibilities for direct democracy, to make transparent and concretize declarations reforming Constitutional relations, especially those which became an object of conflict and polemics in the preceding period. The Government will see to it that those laws coming from the Constitution of the Slovak Republic are in harmony with the essence of and in the sense of basic rights and freedoms, and that their delimitation be used only for stated goals. It will not allow that the level of its economic, legal and political guarantees be undermined.

- Legal norms for the direct election of the president are being prepared, as with elections to the National Council and to local self-administration bodies.
- The Government will propose a widening of the authority of the Supreme Control Board. In the area of prosecution, it will undertake an analysis of its activities, and propose improvements. The Government will support a strengthening of the independence of procurators.
- The Government will strengthen the independence of the judiciary and prepare a new conception of the judiciary with the goal of separating the judicial function from that of the state administration, thus bringing about court autonomy while increasing its responsibilities.
- The Government will realize further decentralizations of responsibility from local state administration to local self-government and reconstituted regional self-government bodies.
- The Government will evaluate the present legal status of state property and enterprising with its property. Continual attention will be paid to legal resolutions to conflicts between employers and employees, between producers and consumers, residential owners and renters, with the purpose of finding legal regulations for the resolution of such conflicts.

The Government regards the continuing respect for human rights and freedoms as an indelible part of the policy of a democratic state. It will create conditions for a society of freedom and solidarity based on mutual respect and tolerance, religious freedom and political plurality.

In the sense of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, it will not allow any form of race or national intolerance. No citizen of the Slovak Republic will encounter disadvantages on the basis of his membership in any national minority or ethnic group. The Government will support all forms of education towards mutual national respect, and in this area counts on the co-operation of non-governmental organizations.

The Government will uphold obligations of the Slovak Republic consequent on signed and ratified international documents. It will undertake an analysis of the state of human and minority rights in the Slovak Republic with regard to international documents, and on the basis of its results will decide on entering further international conventions, on the adoption of a Constitutional law or a law on the position of minorities of the Slovak Republic. It will support concrete programmes for the integration of the Romany minority into the life of the society and create necessary organizational structures for the resolution of this issue.

The Government realizes the importance of a moral renaissance in the society. In this process, it counts on effective support on the part of the churches, non-governmental organizations and the activization of the entire society. The Government will bring about its interface with churches on the basis of mutual respect and effective cooperation.

The Government will create legislative and organizational conditions for the strengthening and widening of citizen initiatives and will support the building of partner relations with the civil sector on all levels of public administration. For attaining the necessary reconstruction of legal procedures, the Government will work within the framework of the plan for legislative work over its four years, with updates each calendar year.

2. Economic policy

A. Macroeconomic policy

The Government has inherited a deeply unbalanced situation, the results of an economic policy which is characterized by the lack of equilibrium between goals and the resources for their achievement. The insufficiency in the creation of financial means and unrealistically high goals has had as a result great pressure on public budgets, a deficit in the current account payment balance and an unbearable growth in foreign indebtedness.

The Government sees solutions to today's problems in a fundamental change of the present economic policy. The complexity of the realizing of a new economic policy lies in the fact that it must presently undergo three processes. The first is measures which prevent the collapse of several sectors such as education and health care. Secondly is the need to adopt stabilization measures whose essential goal must be the need to reduce the fiscal deficit and the payment balance deficit, while the third is creating conditions for quickening the restructuralization and modernization of the Slovak economy, principally by reviving the business environment and undertaking institutional changes which will lead to effective operation of the markets (capital, financial, labour). The Government is pledged to create conditions leading to a minimalization pathological elements such as corruption, bribery, tunnelling, abuse of position, law-breaking and the like.

The Government is aware of the difficulty and complexity of the above manoeuvres, but regards them as the only way out of today's situation. It is not possible to continue further in irresponsible and incompetent policies of burgeoning debt and a life lived at the expense of future generations.

The Government will also have to adopt a number of unpopular measures whose problematic intensity will be all the greater the deeper they are buried in the past. The Government is resolved to take reform steps in such a way that their shock will be evenly sustained by all levels, while the weakest sectors of society will be the less burdened.

In the first two years in office, the basic purpose of the Government will be to consolidate the Slovak economy, to once again establish macroeconomic stability and create conditions for sustainable economic growth.

Sustainable economic growth is the condition which will bring about a more rapid approximation of the Slovak economy to that of the European Union. The Government understands economic growth as the condition for increases in wage levels, an increase in the average household income and a progressive heightening of the standard of living towards average European levels.

Alongside a policy of stabilization, a precondition for sustainable economic growth is also a quickening of the reconstruction of the Slovak economy and support for the growth of its

competitiveness. The Government will therefore quickly prepare a mid-term programme for the development of structural reforms and the transformation of the Slovak economy. The Government will present a proposal for a Commission for the development of economic policy in a mid-term perspective. This Commission should function as an inter-Ministry group with the goal of closure dialogue with the European Commission which would to a greater extent integrate Slovak economic policy with the Slovak Republic's entrance procedures to the European Union and be the basis for the fulfilling of the convergence criteria following EU accession and the Euro-zone.

The Government will ensure the reality and plausibility of these aims by a co-ordination of the parts of economic policies and the ongoing harmony of its financial policy with the NBS monetary policy. In the formation of economic policy in a mid-term perspective, the Government will keep in mind the longer-term economic strategy which will be prepared over the next two years.

During the first half of its term in office, the Government foresees a slowing of the tempo of economic growth. This will result from diminishing domestic demand influenced by the reduction of the financial deficit and also from lessened external demand following from the world economic recession. A further factor is the present low competitiveness of Slovak exports. Towards the end of its term in office, the Government foresees a rise in long-term stable economic growth at an annual level of between 4 and 5%.

The new quality of economic growth and improved conditions for the development of small and medium enterprising should be in place towards the end of Government's term in office, presumed on a lowering of the unemployment rate to about 10%.

As regards inflation, the Government foresees a temporary rise mostly as a result of adopting long-neglected deregulation of prices. The Government considers low inflation as one of the key goals of its economic policy and will therefore create conditions for its return to initial levels.

Support for the restructuring and competitiveness of the Slovak economy will be primarily aimed at restructuring of the business sphere, at support for small and medium businesses, at an increase of foreign investors and of innovative development and use of human capital.

In the economic part of the SR integration strategy, the Government's starting point will be the document Agenda 2000 and Partnership for Entry, in which the European Commission set for Slovakia economic priorities and conditions which Slovakia fulfil in order to receive financial resources within EU aid for achieving these goals. These priorities can be divided into short and mid-term.

The Government will build a legal frame for increasing interest in direct foreign investment in the form of signing bilateral agreements on support and protection of investments, above all with OECD and EU countries, and then with countries with which Slovakia has the highest amount of foreign trade. It will also continue the discussion process on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

A common mark of economically successful countries is their quality of economic competition. The Government therefore supports the creation and protection of a competitive environment and will include this in its economic policy. This comes not only from the SR

Constitution but also from the need to ensure long-term economic growth. Besides implementing principles of equality of opportunity in the entire Government policy, the independence of the Anti Monopoly Board SR will be strengthened. The strengthening of this Board should be carried out primarily by changes to the way of appointing the body controlling its activity. The Government will propose an update to the Law on Economic Competition which would create a collective body, composed of independent specialist, responsible for the Board's operations. The Government is considering making this a constitutional law, by which conditions for economic growth would be improved and a clear signal of the stability of the principle of equal opportunity in the Slovak economy would be sent abroad.

The Government considers social dialogue with employers and trade unions an important tool for achieving social consensus in overcoming accumulated and long unsolved problems in the economic and social areas.

B. Public finances

The Government will put in place system measures in the area of public finances, will improve the budget system, increase the transparency of financial flows in all elements of public finances and will emphasise the keeping of financial and budget discipline under public control.

The Government intends to reduce the extent and distribution of financial resources through the state budget. It will move towards the decentralization and democratization of state finances, with an accent on the strengthening of the responsibilities and status of local self-administration in providing services to the citizenry, together with ensuring the appropriate funds for their financing.

In the state and public administration, it will reduce costs for operating state and public administration following from an analysis of the competence law and from changes to regional state administration bodies.

The Government will begin to enforce a new approach to financial planning, in the form of a mid-term financial overview which will concretize approaches to securing the financial purposes in the mid-term in wider internal and external economic contexts. It will also evaluate and predict public sector financial flows in connection with developments on the level of micro and macro spheres as well as establishing a fiscal frame for establishing the state budget.

The Government will examine the necessity of the existence of state, non-state and public funds, and will propose amendments to their legal forms, with a view to their predominant activities.

By realization of the state treasury system project, the Government will act towards the firming of financial discipline, raising the efficiency of controls on enterprising with state budget funds on the basis of a single account, which should markedly reduce the possibility of unauthorized expenses from these funds and thereby safeguard the daily financial liquidity of the state budget.

The Government will eliminate reasons for the continuing deficit enterprising of the state budget and will minimize the results of state and public debt on the balanced development of the economy. It will mobilize state budget revenue. The goal of this Government is to arrive at

balanced financial enterprising of the so-called general government by the end of its term in office.

The Government will implant the principles of economy and effective use of distributed resources from public sources. With relation to the budget sectors, it will demand that they, before formulating their claims on budget funds, analyse their needs from the point of view of economic policy priorities and mid-term fiscal goals.

The Government will pay attention to SR outstanding claims abroad, with emphasis on the transparency of the process and their public control.

In connection with budget development, the Government will reduce the tax burden of the lowest income groups and evaluate the enforcement of the so-called millionaire tax on the income on the physical entities. The Government is considering this solution by changing the tax group limits for taxes on income of physical entities as well as scaling for inflation. It will reduce excessive luxury consumption by cancelling expense and recreation claims in income tax, which will raise final consumption. It will also cancel tax advantages for those who received property from privatization and bring more advantageous investment policy support for all taxpayers in accord with structural goals.

In the mid-term period the Government plans to reduce the income tax rate for legal entities and the total compulsory burden of the business sphere. Additionally, property increases will be taxed if not declared in the property declarations. It will support local self-administration by gradual decentralization of public finances. It will prepare tax reform in the areas of property and income taxes from the point of view of enacting family income taxes, ecological elements and harmonization with European law.

The Government is dedicated to restricting the extent of the shadow economy, tax avoidance and speculation. The Government will reform tax legislation and make tax administration more effective by raising tax discipline in the areas of customs and taxes. The activities of tax bureaus will be directed at control of risky tax payers, analytic and informational activities of tax administration will be strengthened, the authority of tax office employees in recovering unpaid taxes and customs will be increased. Conditions will be created for shortening legal actions regarding non-payment of taxes and the role of the financial police will be strengthened. The Government will consider the liquidation of tax claims on the basis of property security. It will institute public control of non-payers. It will tightly restrict exceptions and relaxations in tax and custom administration and will give regular information on their provision. It will improve the methodics of tax office administration and raise their specialist capability. The responsibility of tax offices and the level of their interaction with the public will be raised. Tax evasion gaps referring to transfer prices of goods, services and capital will be minimalized.

The Government will create conditions so that the customs area will be prioritized in the E.U. entry process. Obligations following from WTO and CEFTA will be respected. The Government will initiate discussions with WTO on a minimalization of the effect of the greatly differentiated starting position of countries in the process of lowering custom charges.

The Government will create preconditions so that internationally compatible legal forms of domestic market protection will be more efficiently used.

The Government will progressively solve issues connected to problems in the administration of indirect taxes by customs bodies and will strengthen the control activity of

customs bodies. More attention will be paid to building an infrastructure of border crossings, with emphasis on the future outside border of the Slovak Republic and European Union.

The Government will make maximum efforts in the fight against corruption in tax and customs administration.

It will intensify the participation of tax and customs bodies in the fight against money laundering, other forms of corruption and will intensify the fights against drugs, customs fraud, organized crime, child pornography and motor vehicle theft.

In the consolidation and progressive equalization of the whole area of public finances, the Government will adapt its spending policy.

In evaluating the wages of employees in the budget and contribution sphere connected with the SR state budget, the Government will start with the goal of motivating qualified specialist work and follow the growth tendency of living expenses and income growth in other economic sectors.

With the goal of reducing investment demand, the Government will reduce capital spending on infrastructure projects. It will see to it that in the case of stopping or freezing investment actions, there are no excessive losses.

In providing budget grants and contributions to agriculture and heating, the Government will use methods ensuring maximum effect. On principle it will cancel across the board price supports which are economically damaging, expensive and socially unfair, in light of the fact that through these everyone is supported, not only the socially at risk. In agriculture it will gradually weaken the payment function of subsidies and replace it with a productivity function supporting an increase in intensity, fall of expenses, production effectiveness, possibly also non-productive functions (agrotourism). The Government will support agriculture development projects. It will propose useful measures for the development of agricultural businesses and enterprising in economically backward regions.

The Government will evaluate the working of state's financial/economic instruments for support of housing construction, ensure its effectiveness with special reference to citizens with low incomes and will create conditions for a functional housing market. State financial support will be provided in accord with budgetary policy.

After a consistent analysis of economically adjusted expenses and adequate profit, the Government will gradually and sensitively address several serious disproportions in the area of regulated prices. This mainly involves adjusting regulated prices and changing the method of price regulation, primarily in the fuel energy complex, transportation, posts and telecommunications, rent, and services connected with housing. The Government will direct the change in such a form to motivate the regulated subjects towards increased efficiency.

The Government will oversee that the individual steps and their intensity will be in close harmony with state social policy so that the social bearability of the executed measures will be ensured. The Government will cancel that part of the price law, which creates an opening for market non-conforming interventions into the price system.

The Government will ensure a slowing of the growth of indebtedness of the Central Government and will create preconditions for its ongoing reduction. The Government's intention is to foster a bearable debt load which it will be able to amortize with minimum expenses.

The Government will create legislative, organization and material preconditions for institutionalizing state supervision over non-commercial insurance, strengthen the competence of state supervision in relation to health insurance bodies and the Social Insurance Company and enforce co-ordination of state supervision bodies and ministry departments in the performance of supervision over the securing of the policy of the labour market and the enterprising of the SR National Labour Office as well as of additional old age pensions.

In connection with information from controls of public procurement of goods, services and public works, the Government will inspire legislative reforms touching on sanctions in compatibility with EU laws.

The Government will create in budget enterprising conditions for fulfilling EU assumptions and ensure conditions for the modelling of Slovak Republic activity within the European Union.

C. Support for enterprising and industrial policy

The Government aims to contribute to the vitalization of the business community by creating conditions for the reduction of interest rates and of better access to credit. It will therefore reduce the public finance deficit, restructure and privatize, and harmonize monetary and fiscal policy. To the reduction of interest rates will also contribute an increase in direct foreign investment, a priority of Government policy which will enable a wider usage of non-credit resources for restructuring of enterprises and in this way aid the reducing of credit demand and a fall in their cost.

Towards the resolution of inter-enterprise indebtedness, the Government will present legislation to take advantage of various forms of forgiving debts such as the restructuring and securing of debts, the capitalization of outstanding claims, and others. The law on bankruptcy must work in parallel with the financial market, all its institutions and spheres.

The restructuring of the non-financial business sector will need to be connected with the restructuring of the financial sector. The Government will give priority to a quickening of the vitalization of the banking sector.

The Government as soon as possible will enact a principle tightening of bank supervision in order to hold continuing unfavourable developments in certain banks.

For those banks included in the restructuring process, the Government will initiate a reworking of special rules for the credit trade, stock trading, the paying of dividends and bonuses, real estate purchases and providing sponsoring. The responsibility of members of executive boards, supervisory councils and top management for the taking of business decisions will be increased. Bank ownership will be made more transparent, with the goal of avoiding abuse of monopoly positions in a bank's financial operations. The Government will consider the possibility of state financial participation in the vitalization of the credit portfolios of selected restructured banks. The Government will take institutional, legal and tax measures which will increase banks' ability to play a more active role in enterprise restructuring.

The Government will support policies of granting bank licences which will increase their competitiveness. By enabling the participation of foreign investors, the Government aims to contribute to a capital strengthening of the banking sector, to a transfer of banking know-how and

to improved access to foreign resources. It supports the orientation of Slovenská sporiteľňa a.s. as a deposit bank with a focus on adequate personal accounts and their consequent placement in secure stock and bonds while halting its credit activities and stabilizing its activity on the interbank market. In co-operation with the Co-operative Union SR, the Government is considering a new law on savings and loan co-operatives.

The Government will prepare and realize more efficient regulation of the financial sector. It will form a joint institution for supervision over banks, savings banks, collective investment bodies, insurance companies and stock traders.

The Government will support transparency and healthy competition in commercial insurance, in combating monopolies, and will implement effective supervision of insurers for the protection of contributors' financial resources.

The Government goals in coming years will include the creation of conditions for the development of the capital market. The basic precondition for achieving this goal will be the passing of capital market legislation prepared on a high expert level and in agreement with European Union law. This will involve a recodification of the law on stock trading, a new law on collective investment and on legal articles for forming an independent regulatory body for supervision over the whole financial market.

The Government will create legislative and institutional conditions for the development of collective investing, primarily of investment and pension funds and unit trusts. Therefore the Government will devote its efforts to removing present deformations in collective investing which have appeared in the last four years. The Government will introduce measures to motivate the citizenry towards investing on the capital market, whether individually or through collective investment bodies.

The Government will undertake steps aimed at increasing the supply of information by issuers of publicly traded stocks, at achieving the necessary level of market liquidity and removing demotivating tax regulations. The intention will also be to cancel unregistered stocks, with the goal of making transparent the ownership of privatized property and of preventing ownership conflicts.

The Government will ensure the true achievement of these goals through regular harmonization of its policy with National Bank of Slovakia monetary policy. The approximation process within European integration will be consistently carried out in all areas.

The Government will undertake changes to the state aid provision system which will not interfere with economic competition and will be in line with E.U. rules.

In the interest of support for the pro-export policy, the Government will focus attention on improved supervision of raw and home-produced materials, using measures in accord with appropriate WTO regulations.

We will reduce the number of strategic enterprises so that remaining on the list will be only companies of the character of natural monopolies. The Government will stay away from direct input into them.

The Government will make the system of contests and compensations more elastic and efficient. The Government will create stimulative and sanction preconditions so that the amount of material, financial and human potential trapped in ineffective business entities will be greatly

reduced and so that this wasted potential may be actualized in effective, competitive enterprising activities.

The Government will propose the enactment of legislative reforms which will in a fundamental way stiffen penalties for damaging the public interest, fraud, tax evasion, cheating stock holders or depositors. It will raise the personal (and legal) responsibility of titular representatives of those bodies, which deal with others' resources (banks, insurance houses, investment funds, pension funds and the like).

It is a question clarifying, re-evaluating or cancelling all laws, declarations and measures which allow the preferential treatment of narrow groups to the detriment of the majority (revitalized law, fund for the support of foreign trade, misty and uncontrolled tax forgiving, sanctions interest, customs tax preference for privateers and the like). The granting of licences and export and import quotas will take place in a transparent and competitive way, mostly by auction.

The search for methods of a differentiated approach to private business and small enterprisers so that the legislative and regulative frame will not present barriers to the development of these sectors.

The Government considers the rise in criminality in the business sphere as a serious problem and is committed to prepare in this area series of measures so that business people as citizens and taxpayers are protected against organized criminality, blackmail, arson and the like.

The Government will enact an industrial policy whose chief priority will be integration into European structures. In the period 1998 - 2002 it will aim at the realization of these basic goals:

- the restructuring, stabilization and resolution of sector crises, increasing export, reducing energy demand, raising the productivity of work and the share of added value, speeding up the restructuring of the machine industry, re-evaluating the arms industry in accord with the security policy of the country, primarily in the form of state-supported programmes in harmony with the recommendations of EU and OECD
- ensuring the essential preconditions allowing for the competitiveness of industry on global markets, mainly by support of the creation of an environments favourable to business initiatives and taking advantage of the comparative advantages of Slovak industry with the goal of raising the rate of industrial production
- support for small and medium enterprising. The Government will initiate an analysis of legislation with the goal of improving conditions for the founding and development of small and medium enterprising. In the institutional area, it will re-evaluate the effectiveness of the National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprising and the Slovak Guarantee and Development Bank with the goal of raising the effectiveness of their common co-operation in these sectors' enterprising. With respect to the need for a transfer from quantitative to qualitative development, there will be, besides the traditional forms of support such as soft loans, guarantees, seed capital and others, progressively prepared new development and support programmes.
- support for innovative development and the National Quality Programme in the business sphere. In parallel with the vitalization of the economy, support for research and development will be increased according to selected programme directions in industry.

We are preparing a reworking of the EU industrial policy in SR conditions and a proposal of approaches for beginning discussions with the EU, we are creating a system of "catching-up" goals, on the basis of which we will implant partnership criteria and attract resources for the accomplishment of the state development programmes to validate EU rules in the area of structural funds to their full extent.

We are working out "industrial zone" and "industrial development parks" models with the goal of building appropriate conditions for the accomplishment of structural changes and development goals of the SR economy with active participation by foreign capital.

The Government is preparing a new SR energy policy in accord with recommendations of the European Commission and the International Energy Agency of the OECD. A priority of the new policy will be integration into European structures and a reliable energy supply for the Slovak Republic. We will continue with co-operation in the European Commission Programme for building a trans-European network and will actively share in the implementation of the Energy Charter Treaty as well as continue in co-operation with IAAE and EEC - UNO. We will take necessary steps for SR membership in the Atomic Energy Agency of OECD.

In the electro-energy area we are preparing a complex transformation, including the transformation of distribution plants to a share company with decisive state influence and with emphasis on reducing energy demands. We are re-evaluating the concept of further constructing the nuclear powerplant at Mochovce and operating the V1 and V2 nuclear plants at Bohunice with regard to nuclear safety. We will bring the nuclear plant A1 in Bohunice to a radiation safe state. We will create conditions for the integration of the SR transmission system to the UCPTE European system and connecting to it with all neighbouring countries.

The Government will ensure the strengthening of Slovak gas with the goal of attaining positive effect in relation to resources for natural gas transit and effectively joining the processes of integration and globalization within the International European Gas System. We will ensure the development of a transit system with the goal of raising its transit capacity and the safety of transfer of natural gas to third countries. We will establish conditions for the development and raised dependability of the gas facility complex and the construction of underground gas storage, and we guarantee the stability, safety and flexibility of the SR gas system. We will complete diversification of gas line connections with neighbouring countries and thus create the possibility of natural gas supplies from various sources.

In the area of usage of raw materials we will support the use of domestic supplies for meeting SR needs and motivate the rational and optimal use of extraction of domestic primary energy sources for ensuring dependable production of electricity and heat.

We will accept a programme of gradual rise of prices for electric, gas and heat so that prices for groups of consumers reach a level to cover supply expenses and adequate profit. This programme will take into account the influence of energy prices on the economy, the ecology and the social sphere.

With respect to SR economy's high energy demand and the high dependence on imported primary energy sources, we will legislatively and economically support energy saving and the use of renewable energy sources with the goal of reducing real consumption and by this, our dependence on imported energy. The main instruments of support will be price policy and renewal of the Government Programme for support of economic activities leading to energy saving.

The SR Government will create conditions for speeding up the SR access process to the EU, for intensive and quality levels of structural dialogue between SR and EU with the goal of placing Slovakia in the first group of candidate countries. Over the whole access process we will strive for a balanced consideration of the SR national interests.

We support the formation of highly specialized negotiating teams and the working of the new aims of the PHARE Programme and other EU Support Programmes.

The SR Government will support a wide WTO Programme of multilateral trade discussions within the new round of discussions on world trade, from which are expected balanced advantages and obligations for Slovakia.

The SR Government will support the entry of new countries to the World Trade Organization in the interest of spreading the trade opportunities for SR business entities and help building effective access for the service area, whose share in total world trade is increasing.

The SR Government will support further trade liberalization, signing new free trade agreements and so strengthen business relations between SR and third countries and groups of countries in CEFTA and EFTA.

We will support solutions of a common approach to international trade issues, with emphasis on making trade procedures easier, in harmony with the activities of international organizations – UNO, UNCTAD, OECD and others.

We are adopting a complex programme of export support aimed at a transparent enforcement of economic instruments for the increase of export performance and the know-how of business bodies, especially small and medium entrepreneurs, with the goal of improving movement to new markets. We will re-evaluate state administration competencies for increasing co-ordination and more effective use of the tools and funds of EXIM Bank, the Fund for Support of Foreign Trade and other organizations, with the goal of improving SR export performance.

We will support the project of uniting Slovak business groups to the international network "Trade Points" as well as forming a World Trade Centre in Bratislava.

We will pay special care to the effective new reinforcing of the economic dimension of diplomacy in the interest of joining Slovakia to the international division of work and international organizational structures.

The SR Government will support the spread of intergovernmental agreements aimed at goods and services trade and economic co-operation.

We will deepen priority mutual trade links with the Czech Republic and a co-ordination of trade policy towards third countries within the customs union.

We will further expand trade and economic co-operation with neighbouring countries making use of programmes and instruments of cross-border co-operation, with special reference to V-4 countries.

We actively support the development of foreign trade co-operation with developed economies outside of Europe, as well as selected countries of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

We will pay increased attention to the development of trade and economic activities with the Russian Federation, with the goal of achieving in the near future a positive change in the area of equalizing the trade balance.

The SR Government will create conditions for the official participation of Slovakia at international trade fairs and exhibitions presenting goods and services of Slovak origin.

The SR Government will pay close attention to the consumer protection area, primarily in the area of creation of legislation in harmony with EU directives so that the legal system in the area of taxation will be effective and compatible with that in EU countries. By creating conditions for a rise in quality of the performance of inspection bodies, it will ensure lawfulness and adequate protection of consumer rights.

The Government will initiate the establishment of a legislative frame reforming the operations of business chains.

The Government will support the development of tourism as one of the priorities of its economic policy. Activities will be aimed at forming tourism as a branch capable of creating work opportunities and hard currency income.

The Government will create conditions for a growing system compatibility with EU countries. We are adopting a law on tourism, which will establish institutional support for tourism and divide responsibilities between state and local administration.

We will actively support the wider involvement of Slovakia in international tourism co-operation by active membership in international organizations and associations. This will take advantage of international investment sources with the goal of raising the quality of tourist trade infrastructure.

The SR Government is aiming at a purposeful publicity of Slovakia plus improved information on the activities and attractions of tourism in Slovakia as a tourist destination with the goal of successfully entering the international tourism market.

D. Privatization

The Government sees as one of its priorities a continuation of the privatization process. A condition of this however is transparency in all transformation steps, following the rules of economic competition and the legislative environment belonging to it.

For these reasons the Government sets as its goals:

- to confirm the legality of privatization up to now and enforcement of the public interest,
- to carry out further privatization by the contest method under public control, with the possibility of the evaluating judicial privatization decisions, such that privatization truly created conditions for real reconstruction and vitalization of privatized enterprises.

The Government will publish a register of all privatized property, will propose cancelling unregistered stocks and silent partnerships as well as prepare a detailed analysis of the course of privatization from its beginnings up to today.

Where the law has been broken and the national interest damaged, adequate sanction measures will be implemented.

It will re-evaluate also the foundation and legality of the advantages for holders of property, which has been privatized up to the present.

The Government will consider the gradual repurchase of FNM securities and thus will try to satisfy the claims of citizens who have reached 60 years of age. At the same time it will allow dealing with these securities on the capital market. The Government will consider possibilities of paying for FNM securities by an offer of shares in lucrative share companies.

The Government ensures legislation of competent relations and the performance of state ownership rights between all institutions in the privatization process, in particular the Ministry for administration and privatization of national property, the National property fund and the founding departments, so that the transparency of privatization approaches and their control is guaranteed.

The Government will maintain state influence also after the realization of a decision of privatization. The Government will take such legislative and organizational measures so that FNM will consistently require the fulfilment of contractual obligations from receivers of property.

The Government will enforce that FNM draw the consequences from the non-fulfilment of contracts between receivers of property and FNM. If the new owners, for various reasons and after several years, are not capable of developing the privatized companies, the government will seek other possibilities through measures which will contribute to the revival and restructuring of these companies.

In the interest of completing the privatization of state enterprises and the organizations in economic departments, including the ownership part of FNM in share companies, the Government will evaluate and newly define the strategic interest and state participation in the branches of energy, telecommunications, machine works, transport and others, with the goal of ensuring effective performance of the rights and duties of the state.

The Government will also form conditions for the privatization of banks. The privatization of banks must be carried out in a way that brings to these banks necessary resources, managerial know-how, trustworthiness and improved positions on global financial markets. The Government will not allow privatization to bank creditors.

After an evaluation of the transformation concept in the health care area, the Government will declare that privatization of selected health facilities be allowed only by such ownership bodies who can guarantee that the health facility will provide quality health services.

The Government will create preconditions for the possible involvement of foreign investors, primarily strategic, to the process of state enterprise privatization.

The Government will organize the privatization process by contest and transparent forms so that the public interest is respected.

The Government will propose the measures, which will ensure controllability of privatization by the Supreme Control Board and state prosecution bodies.

In re-evaluating privatization up to now, the Government will strictly use such methods that will not hinder the possibility of ownership to such new investors (domestic and foreign) who will be a guarantee of the vitalization and restructuring of enterprises.

E. Transport, posts and telecommunication

The basic state transport policy will be a guarantee of payment of losses for providing actions in the public interest in the area of personal rail transport and regular bus service, a harmonization of individual transport systems in the sense of effective performance including other expenses and the arrangement of a system for providing social discounts.

The Government will create conditions for effective financing of infrastructure projects from non-budgetary and private sources.

The Government considers it essential to harmonize the tempo of motorway construction and railway modernization in the interest of proportional development of branches and effective use of available financial resources. A basic priority has been the construction and modernization of infrastructure of multimodal corridors IV, V, VI, whereas this Government will support railway modernization as an economic, ecological and energy acceptable alternative.

In the interest of the rationalization of transportation efficiency, the Government will prepare a new project of construction of motorways and first class roads connected to the development of motorism and Government financial possibilities. The Government will prepare legislation and support the realization of integrated transport systems on a regional basis and will create conditions for improving transport efficiency with the goal of ensuring a heightened share of public transport systems for personal transit in comparison with individual travel.

The Government will prepare a system for an objective evaluation of resources, expenses, financial flows and the creation of a social programme for transportation workers.

The Government will re-evaluate investment policies in the area of transportation. It will support the preparation and realization only of such projects in which, by standard approaches, economic effectiveness, social benefit and environmental acceptability have been proven. It will create conditions for the elimination of long term lacks of investment for the renewal of railway, long distance and local bus fleets.

The Government will create conditions for the development and expansion of combined transport for the goal of protection of the environment, a rise in the safety of goods transport, the removal of crowding on transit by building and modernizing a system of terminals of combined transit and container transport in the sense of parameters established by the AGTC Agreement.

Continuation of the economic transformation of transportation organizations, post and telecommunications will be organized by the Government so that they are transparent and ensure respect for the interests of the state and its decisive influence and control, as well as the total financial vitalization of these sectors by creating legislation for the use of market mechanisms.

The Government will ensure the development and liberalization of civil air travel, including restructuring of airport administration, harmonization and integration of the management of air operations in European space on the assumption of a safeguarding of the interests of the state and regions.

The Government will address fare liberalization by a considered pricing policy without shocks and holding to a socially bearable level.

The Government is carefully considering reconstruction of a bridge across the Danube between the border towns Sturovo and Ostrihom.

The Government will prepare the technical, legislative and economic conditions for the entry of the post office to the unified European market of postal services.

The Government supports the creation of a competitive environment in the area of posts and telecommunications, which will contribute to quality services for inhabitants. The Government considers the telecommunications branch as strategic and therefore even after transformation state influence will remain.

The Government will intensify forms of bilateral and multilateral co-operation with the goal of ensuring active and effective performance in top functions in international and intergovernmental organizations. It will refine the international agreement basis for the area of transportation, posts and telecommunications.

The Government will ensure the creation of a modern, reliable and multifunctional transport police for all kinds of transport (rail, road, air, water).

F. Agriculture and rural policy

Agriculture, forestry, water and countryside development are considered a significant part of Government policy.

In the development of agriculture we will create adequate conditions for the use of agricultural land, with the goal of raising the effectiveness and competitiveness of agriculture so that it may produce cheap and quality foodstuffs, competitive also on foreign markets. For basic groceries, a person with an average salary must work 1.5 to 2 times longer than his equal in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

For the stabilization of the agricultural/foodstuffs complex and the domestic food trade, we will create preconditions for ensuring an adequate retirement, structural stability of business entities, a rise in the productive potential of the land and better usage of the capacities of the finishing industry, as well as safeguarding a balanced development of production in all regions and production areas of Slovakia.

The decisive goals of individual agricultural branches have been worked out in the Programme for the development of agriculture and foodstuffs, forest and water economy for the next ten years. Following from the new joint EU agricultural policy, from 2000 we will work out agricultural policy and create preconditions for the use of resources from EU structural funds within the SAPARD - Programme for the support of agriculture and countryside development for associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the pre-entry period.

The programme will start from the basic goals contained in the law on agriculture, forests and hunting, and will respect the economic links between agriculture and the national economy, as well as showing the department's preparedness for EU access.

We will consider the preparation of a law on special credit conditions for agriculture with the goal of solving the financing of storage of certain agriculture and foodstuff products, providing long-term loans for modernization and technical renewal and in this context we propose to solve the block of old loans. The instruments for support mechanisms (subsidy system

using resources from state funds) are worked into individual programmes with the goal of their more effective usage in production areas. Specific attention will be devoted to mountain and submountain production areas and other disadvantaged regions in the interest of balancing higher expenses on production and stabilization of the companies' enterprising in non-competitive production conditions. The subsidy system used until now will be re-evaluated so that it supports the active, productive function and not a passive subsistence on state donations. Subsidies will be aimed at purposeful support of concrete development programmes and projects.

For creating a re-evaluation mechanism, the Government will propose an updating of the law on agriculture in which the share of donations from the state budget is set out.

In the interest of improving the mechanisms and instruments of effective market regulation, we will transform the present state fund of market regulation into an intervention agency, a similar institution as works in EU. In this context we will evaluate price policy and regulation measures in farm animal production, where there is the greatest disparity between the expense and sale price. We will guarantee an acceptable price level for producers and consumers.

A proper combination of price and donation policy will stop the fall in the level of beef cattle, sheep and pigs. At the same time we will support the process of formation of producer and marketer association.

Along with measures for raising the intensity of agricultural production we will use the present law on agriculture and other legislative norms in the process of protecting home products. We will adopt instruments for the support of the export of agricultural products and groceries while as a forecast of the growth of foodstuff export we consider the growth of effectiveness and competitive agriculture.

The Government respect the diversification of owner and enterpriser forms. We will pay attention to the development of the co-operative's ownership and the finished transformation of the coop. Similarly we will support land market and the purchase of land, except state-owned, for farmers and businessmen. At present we are preparing legislation for the long-term rent of the agricultural land. We will limit the speculative purchase and sale of agricultural and forest lands and will propose legislative measures which will block the use of notary certificates for gaining ownership of agricultural or forest land, or submitting such a certificate for court approval .

The Government considers consolidation of ownership relations in agriculture as one of the key preconditions for its vitalization and effectiveness. It will find such forms of consolidation which will not damage the rights of those who were restituted the land and at the same time will speed the process of ownership restructuring. The Government considers important the creation of conditions for land market development. The Government will initiate possibilities for the transfer of unclaimed land from the Slovak land fund to community ownership.

We will propose instruments and measures which will motivate managers of leading companies and agrobusinessmen to take over these enterprises which have run into serious economic problems. In this context we propose a change of the Rules for use and rental of agricultural land so that representatives of the community take a direct part in the rental process. We support the restructuring of the foodstuffs industry with the goal of raising the effectiveness of finishing agricultural production and by increasing competitiveness, we create a space for the realization of agricultural production.

We will propose a reduction of taxes on agricultural land so that land rent can be more affordable.

We support the development of commercial institutions of market organizations such as the grain and commodity exchange and the like.

We place the state forest policy under the need for long-term strategic goals of forestry development in Slovakia, in which there are protected, conserved and replanted forests. Its validation will be guaranteed mostly through the state-financed economic reform of forests without regard to their ownership and use. Protection of the environment by means of caring for forests has become a priority for creating the ecological balance and stability of the country. We consider equally important to take advantage of the productive function of forests, above all by home working of wood in light of the high profit margin of this renewable resource, with the goal of stabilizing the retirement pension situation of forest managers.

The Government will aim at the passing of legislative norms fixing the position of forest state property, its administration and usage, as well as the operation of non-economic or insufficiently economic non-state forest property.

The support policy in forestry will aim at securing the main goals of forestry, at least in the raising of expenditures as regards forest enterprising in the public interest. Public benefit work in forests and the state forest development programmes for forest renewal and nature preservation will be safeguarded in the form of state contracts.

Unifying and strengthening state forest supervision and performing specialist advising by state forest institutions will secure the level of forest enterprising for all users.

We will assure that state water enterprising policies will provide for economic and other social needs along with other purposed management, rational use and water protection.

We will propose measures for systematic care in the operation and maintenance of water sources and other water enterprising property, by which we will achieve a lessening of the claims in the state budget.

Water enterprising transformation will have its starting point in the sense of the SR Constitution (Article 4) which defines water sources and underground water as exclusive state ownership.

We will use legislative and organisational instruments to assure the function of the water dam system while leaving space for achieving strategic state interests. By a cost-free transfer of present piping and sewer systems, we will allow communities to fulfil in a full measure their duties to provide the citizenry with drinking water, draining and cleaning of waste waters. We will prepare a bill on reservoirs and drainage for the reason that, in separating their operation, it will be necessary to unify conditions to provide the citizenry with drinking water and to set conditions for enterprising in this branch.

Communities, on the basis of their own initiative, will be able to build functioning organisational structures, which will also allow for the participation of foreign capital.

By appropriate legislation, we will ensure the transfer of irrigation and drainage facilities to the owners, users or legal entities of agricultural land in order to prevent neglect and abuse, and to create conditions for their proper exploitation. In the present period we will form for this purpose a budgetary organisation dedicated to the care of property given to users by the state.

Through an integrated rural policy, the Government will present measures supporting economic and social diversification in the countryside, based on the use of all natural, human and material resources. Our goal is to ensure a suitable living standard and improved quality of life for rural inhabitants, to form an appropriate social climate, protection and creation of a healthy environment. To achieve the above goals, we will prepare a rural development programme which will determine strategic steps and concrete measures to the year 2006.

We will join the new political scheme for rural development in Europe and the European Charter for rural areas. We will start to realise the convention on continuously sustainable exploitation of land, including its state protection, in accord with the most modern world trends.

We will support the development of science and research from state funds with the goal of maintaining and effectivizing work in science-research institutes, as well as transferring these findings into praxis.

The Government will deepen its co-operation with the Slovak Agricultural and Foodstuffs Chamber as well as with interested business associations in agriculture without regard to their ownership forms, in the interest of raising their share in the creation of a development concept in all branches of this department.

G. Environment

In accordance with world-wide trends in the developed countries, one of the decisive principles of the Programme of the Government of the Slovak Republic is the principle of permanently sustainable development; environmental protection must become an integral part of all spheres of life of the society. The quality of the environment means the quality of life of all citizens. The Government of the Slovak Republic will ensure the ecologization of the development of the society, especially by introducing ecological principles to all sectors. The Government of the Slovak Republic is also aware of the fact that the application of the principle of permanently sustainable development is essential for the accession of the Slovak Republic to European and transatlantic structures. Economic, social, environmental and institutional indicators and interests will be defined in the National Strategy of Permanently Sustainable Development, as well as regional conceptions and programmes. Co-operation between the sectors in this area will be ensured by the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Permanently Sustainable Development. Similar co-ordinating and consulting bodies will be established in the individual regions.

The Government will ensure the ecological awareness of all sections of society by preparing and implementing the programme "Ecological Academy".

The Government will concentrate on the completion of an environmental law and its harmonization with the law of the European Union. First of all, there will be a new water management and waste disposal law. Further, geological research and a survey law (geological law) will be prepared, as well as amendments to regulations concerning territorial planning, environmental safety and suitability of buildings. The harmonization of the environmental law with the legislation of the European Union will require the preparation of some specific legislation (for example, the packaging law and regulations concerning genetically modified organisms). In connection with the proposed change in state administration organisation on the

local level there will be an amendment to the Environmental State Administration Act. A separate title "Crimes against the Environment" will be included in a new Criminal Code.

The Government of the Slovak Republic will also enforce the ecologization of sectoral legal instruments, especially within the framework of the laws on forests, hunting, fishing, soil, utilization of mineral resources, etc. Amendments to the laws and other regulations concerning air protection, water protection, protection of endangered species of plants and animals, protection of ecosystems, will focus on a considerable increase in their efficiency. The Act on the Evaluation of Impacts on the Environment will have to be applied more consistently, especially its provisions on the environmental evaluation of economic conceptions, territorial plans and selected legislation. The protection of parks and other green areas in communities and environmental safety and suitability of constructions will require special attention and overall completion of the Slovak Environmental Inspection for all sections of environmental protection. The Government will improve the legal system of controlling environmental risks, propose a chemical substances law and regulations on protection against noise. Legal protection and practical care will be extended to locations included in and proposed for the World's Heritage.

The Government of the Slovak Republic will stimulate changes in the behaviour of producers, consumers and polluters and contribute to the creation of resources for the financing of environmental activities by the ecologization of economic instruments and creation of economic conditions for the improvement of the environment, including an increase in the budget of the State Environmental Fund and the application of ecological taxes. Measures and resources will be primarily oriented towards the elimination of the environmental debt, liquidation of all burdens and causes of damage to the environment, strengthening the ecological stability of territories, support for ecological projects, introduction of an environmental audit, compensation for damages caused by environmental limitations, purchase and administration of land protected and used in the public interest, etc. The environmental policy of the Government of the Slovak Republic will be considerably focused on the ecologization of industrial and other sectors of the economy, as well as communal enterprises.

Air pollution will be reduced, especially by supporting the construction of gas distribution systems, larger utilization of recyclable energy resources, ecologization of public transport in towns and using the instruments of pricing policy, taxation and subsidies. The principle "the polluter must pay" will have to be consistently applied.

In the area of minimizing water contamination, the Government of the Slovak Republic will support the progressive connection of the population to sewage systems and the waste water purification system, primarily in areas where waste water could most seriously endanger the water resources. Special attention will need to be paid to preventing the contamination of water by the general application of chemical substances in agriculture. Water polluters will also be involved in monitoring the quality of water.

The Government of the Slovak Republic will support the introduction and improvement of mechanisms to support separate waste collection, its disposal, recycling and re-use as secondary raw materials. Special attention must be given to safe storage and disposal of radioactive waste from nuclear energy facilities, as well as from health care, research and school facilities. The all-republic radioactive waste storage plant in Mochovce will be put into operation and serve as a definite storage place for burned fuels.

As regards the protection and utilization of natural resources, the Government of the Slovak Republic will support efficient and rational utilization of mineral resources and ensure the protection of nature, as well as consistently control the observance of the conditions of exploitation. Special attention will be given to recyclable energy resources, especially the utilization of the geothermal potential in the regions of the Slovak Republic with the best prospects.

We will continue to search new underground water resources for drinking water supplies. Hydro-ecological plans will be focused on the harmonization of the natural potential of rivers, the needs of the population and the ecosystems.

The Government will install the newest trends of environmental protection, particularly in the ecologization of the planning processes and the valorization of ecological networks.

The Government will support international environmental programmes and initiate projects for permanently sustainable development of regions and their ecological acceptability, especially in the regions with the most damaged environment.

The Government will enforce the improvement of the care of protected areas and completion of their network as the skeleton of the ecological stability of the country. It will bring to life the National Strategy of Biodiversity Protection.

The Government of the Slovak Republic will enforce the application of conformity to the law, independent of exploitation and other economic aims or one-sided local interests and, from this viewpoint, it will strengthen the independent decision-making of the state administration bodies responsible for the environment.

The Government will support the completion of the comprehensive monitoring and information system of the environment and its connection to, and permanent co-operation with, other information systems of the sector.

H. Regional development and housing

In order to address the issue of housing development in the Slovak Republic, legislative and institutional conditions will be prepared that will motivate the builders and loan infrastructure in such a way that it is suitable for various income groups of the population.

The Government will create economic conditions for building, on average, 14,000 apartments every year. Apart from the builders' own resources, a comprehensive system of economic tools, especially advantageous loans and tax reliefs, will be used to finance the housing construction and reconstruction of apartments. The Government will improve the existing financing systems - saving through savings and loan associations, the State Housing Development Fund and mortgage loans, and create the system of financing the construction of apartments for rent for citizens with low income. The Government will ensure that the ongoing housing support programmes are completed and funds are spent with maximum economy.

Within the framework of the State Housing Development Fund, the purposes of the support and the determination of technological parameters for providing the support will be reviewed and its public control will be ensured.

The original purpose of the construction saving system will be renewed. The group of construction savers will be extended by corporate entities, the savers' interest in saving for the construction of an apartment will be increased and it will be ensured that temporarily available financial resources resulting from long-term savings of the population will serve the housing development.

The Government will adopt legislative measures to create prerequisites for the development of the system of mortgage loans and to revive the mortgage bond market in order to obtain resources for granting loans.

The Government will adopt the necessary economic and legislative amendments to clearly define the obligations of the owners or administrators of the technological infrastructure and ensure its development in accordance with the approved territorial plans.

The Government will propose that the legislation concerning the transformation of apartments and administration and management of the apartment fund that is incompatible with the market economy be amended or repealed and the rights of the owners be strengthened and the extent of regulatory and administrative measures be considerably reduced in this area.

The Government will enforce a consistent application of the principles of public procurement and prepare a new public procurement law in order to make this process more transparent and provide more information about concluded contracts. It will extend the obligatory application of the law to entities operating in the sectors of water management, power engineering, transport and telecommunications and determine the institutional framework for resolving disputes and controlling the process of public procurement in accordance with the requirements of the European Union.

In accordance with the Association Agreement, it will create rules to support the utilization of domestic raw materials, goods and resources within the system of public procurement during the transitional period in order to reduce differences between the regions of the Slovak Republic and support the creation of new jobs especially in the regions with above-average unemployment.

In order to develop and increase the competitive ability of the Slovak building industry, the Government will create motivations and conditions for the investment in modern technologies and a technological production base for building organizations and the building materials industry.

The Government will create conditions for finding a solution to the relative surplus of building capacities by exporting building works to developed European countries on the basis of intergovernmental agreements on the employment of the staff of Slovak firms abroad. In the countries where the financing is less reliable but where Slovak buildings capacities are traditionally exported, the possibilities of specified economic connections will be used (trading in crude oil and gas),

The Government will adopt a long-term programme of reconstruction of buildings, giving emphasis to the reconstruction of apartments in order to save the building fund and considerably extend its useful life by improving it to the level of the current technological and equipment standards. In so doing, it will create conditions for decisive energy savings in the non-productive sphere.

The Government will pay full attention to regional development policy, creation and implementation of co-ordinated structural instruments in order to halt and gradually mitigate large social and economic differences between the individual regions of the Slovak Republic.

It is the priority of the Government to create institutional, financial and other prerequisites for the comprehensive regional policy that will be carried out by regional governments after the reform of the public administration is completed. The Government will assert financing of the regional development to allow differentiated approaches of the regions to the implementation of their decisions, which the Government considers to be one of the ways to demonstrate the independence of the regions from the centre. Legislative and institutional measures will be adopted to enable the regions to influence the construction of the technological and social infrastructure by decentralizing competencies and financial resources.

The Government will prepare a regional policy conception that will define the type of regional policy, objectives, tools, territorial units and the institutional framework connected with the draft reform of the public administration.

The Government will prepare a complete change in territorial planning and construction rules that will allow the citizens, municipalities and regions to more efficiently administer their territories.

3. Social area

4. Social policy

The social policy of the Government and state administration requires as wide a social consensus as possible in relation to the necessity to increase the personal participation and responsibility of the citizens for themselves, to accept the principle of social cohesion between the citizens and state guarantees in such life situations that are too much for the citizen to deal with.

The Government will assert a more detailed performance of controlling activities in the area of the observance of labour and legal regulations, including wage regulations, employment regulations and social security regulations and extend sanctions in all cases of their violation.

It is the aim of the Government to orient the social policy in such a way that it becomes a stimulating element of social and economic development rather than hinder it. Social policy must provide motivation for work and solidarity and prevent social exclusion and poverty.

The Government declares its preparedness and willingness to renew the social dialogue within the framework of the Economic and Social Conciliation Council, which should become a platform for seeking a socially acceptable, but also efficient and functional, programme of economic renewal of the indebted Slovak economy.

The Government will support a change in the relationship between employers and employees from the dominance of the employer and owner to a relationship based on social partnership. The Government will propose a tripartite law that will regulate legal relationships of the economic and social partnership when negotiating principled matters of economic and social development in order to maintain social cohesion.

It is one of the basic priorities of the Government to increase productive employment on the basis of the economic growth and restructuring of the economy in view of the requirement to create job opportunities and conditions for a gradual decrease in the unemployment rate.

It will be necessary to improve the activities of the National Labour Office, ensure the economizing and purposefulness of employment services in co-operation with social partners. The activities of the National Labour Office must be made more systematic, transparent and efficient, and in connection therewith, the Government will review the existing system and structure of labour offices.

It will be the priority of macroeconomic measures and active policy on the labour market to increase employment in the regions most suffering from unemployment and to support the development of employment by improving conditions for the development of small and medium-sized businesses. The instrument of the active policy on the labour market will also be reviewed.

The Government, in co-operation with the social partners, will concentrate on an increase in employment, finding solutions and using appropriate instruments of the labour market active policy to prevent long-term unemployment among those who have special problems in finding a job on the labour market due to their health condition, age or other factors and creating special programmes especially for juveniles, school graduates, citizens with reduced work ability and seriously disabled persons, citizens laid off due to structural changes in the economy, and older citizens.

In order for the workforce to flexibly respond to the needs of the labour market, the Government will support the creation of better conditions for the territorial mobility of the workforce, creation of better conditions for the professional mobility of the workforce, especially using a flexible system of requalifications and other forms of education and using part-time work to a greater extent.

The Government will ensure that the system of financial support for the unemployed is reviewed in such a way that it provides a real motivation for the unemployed to seek and take advantage of job opportunities, to use the possibilities of requalification, other form of education and to increase the number of persons that can be employed on the basis of the measures of the labour market active policy.

The Government will complete the reform of the labour law which will result in a new Labour Code and new legislation concerning legal relationships in the public service, including the regulation of relationships between the State and its employees. This is how the Government plans to create conditions for the professional fulfilment of the tasks of the state administration and state affairs.

New labour legislation will be enacted to strengthen the protection of employees within individual and collective labour relationships. In order to protect employees in the event of the employer's insolvency, the Government will propose legislation concerning a guarantee fund that will assume the liabilities of an insolvent employer which will ensure the fulfilment of the employees' claims arising from labour relationships.

The Government considers one of the priorities of the protection of employees to improve work conditions, especially work safety and health protection, work environment and protection of the employees' rights at work. The Government will propose legislation concerning the integrated work inspection on the basis of which an effective system of the protection of

employees at work will be built, and extend the supervisory and advisory functions of the State in the area of work protection.

The fulfilment of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in their professional life, provided and guaranteed by the law, will form an inseparable part of the labour law reform, as regards primarily the access to the employment, professional preparation, promotion, work conditions and remuneration. The Government will focus its attention on creating the instruments and following the observation of the principle of equal opportunity for men and women.

As regards wage policy, the government will create prerequisites to overcome the fall in real work earnings as compared to 1989. Being aware of that fact that the social and economical functions of wages are inseparable, it will follow up the Conception of the Price of Work and its realization project, approved together with the social partners.

The Government will review wage regulation in the context of economic results, and primarily in view of the maintenance of an optimal relation between the wage development and the development of the productivity of labour. In co-operation with the social partners, it will propose further procedures, including the declaration of a concrete framework for negotiations on desired wage development, following and subsequently eliminating the deviations that endanger the economic balance.

Within the guarantee of an appropriate level of minimum wages and minimum wage tariffs, the Government will consider the amount of the life minimum and its re-evaluation mechanism, taking into account the opinion of the social partners. It will assess its impact on the costs of products and services and, subsequently, on employment, primarily in the low-wage categories of employees, and on the expenditures of the state budget and other public budgets. It will primarily review the possibility of the replacement of the minimum wage concept used in legislation, especially in the area of insurance systems, by another appropriate parameter. Based on the level of the minimum wage as the starting point of the formulation of the scale of wage tariffs in the public sector, the Government will propose an appropriate amendment thereto so that their motivating function is not impaired.

The transformation of the system of remuneration of employees in the public sector will be completed, including the creation of a new model of negotiations on employment conditions on the macro-level. This will create conditions for negotiations between the Government and the social partners, primarily concerning proportionate wage developments in the public sector in comparison with the business sector, where the economic possibilities will be respected. The Government will give special attention to a differentiated valuation of the work of the employees working in social service facilities. The Government will ensure further development of the information system in relation to the price of work.

The Government will continue the transformation of the social security system by creating a socially just system based on the personal participation and responsibility of the citizens, social solidarity and state guarantee. This transformation will include the building of the social insurance system. The Social Insurance Act will be prepared for this purpose. The Government will bring up for public discussion the new social insurance system, including the existing system of health insurance, pension scheme and compensations for accidents at work and occupational diseases. The Government will provide space for the universality of the basic social insurance system.

Possibilities will be created to enable other persons to participate in the supplementary old-age insurance scheme, especially self-employed persons, persons co-operating with self-employed persons and employees of state budget funded organizations and subsidized organizations in such a way that the supplementary old-age insurance scheme is accessible to all. The Government will prepare the conception of reform of the old-age insurance scheme.

The Government will continue to fulfil the strategic objectives of the state family policy formulated in the Conception of the State Family Policy aimed at the achievement of relative economic independence of the family, successful fulfilment of its functions, stability and social quality of marital and parental relationships in view of the equality and social division of family roles, creation of optimal conditions for the self-production of the society and adopting such measures that will enable the parents to consistently apply the principle of choice or compatibility between professional and parental roles. This primarily includes the creation of the conditions for bringing in line the fulfilment of the professional and parental roles by guaranteeing the parents' rights to be offered part-time work.

In order to improve childcare, the Government will review the possibility of the extension of additional parental leave from the first three to five years of a child's life. In connection therewith, the Government will propose a method for providing direct financial support to families with children.

In the sphere of state family policy, the Government will complete the state social support system and especially the organisation of this system. It will aim at ensuring the individual direction, consistent control and efficiency of the funds spent by the State on direct financial support for families with children, and individuals. The Government will propose a system of compensations in order to mitigate the impact of the gradual elimination of indirect subsidies and allowances for transport, housing and services related to the preparation of dependent children for occupation at high schools and universities.

Following the reduction of subsidies and allowances and based on the existing knowledge of the application of the legislation concerning children's allowances and additional children's allowances, the Government will prepare draft legislative amendments regarding the provision of these social allowances that will maintain the individual direction of their provision by scaling their amount in relation to the family income, which will apply to all families with dependent children.

It will be an important task in the area of the protection of children's rights to consistently fulfil the Child Rights Convention in the conditions of the Slovak Republic.

The Government will propose measures to prevent the continuous growth of social and pathological phenomena, especially in children. It is necessary to adopt the necessary measures to solve the problems of the juvenile crime rate and juvenile delinquency, cruelty, abuse and endangering of children, drug addiction, demonstrations of intolerance and other negative phenomena.

The Government will focus its attention on senior citizens in view of the creation of conditions for the independence, participation and dignity of old people, also in the light of the main slogan of the International Year of Seniors "Society for all age groups"

In order to integrate disabled citizens in the society, the Government will create conditions for the improvement of the level of their education and finding their place, both at

work and in the society. The establishment and operation of protected workshops and protected workplaces will be financially supported by consistent application of legal sanctions in the event of non-fulfilment of the mandatory proportion of employment of disabled citizens.

It is the aim of the Government to provide funds for the long-term programme of training and education of Romany children, and support Romany employment. It is necessary to make the Romany community interested in the improvement of the quality of their lives.

The Government will review the efficiency and quality of social services in the system of plurality of their providers and the competence of the state administration and municipal authorities for the provision of social aid. The Government will create prerequisites for wider participation of voluntary charities, associations, foundations and other non-state entities in the system of providing social aid.

B. Training and education

The Government considers training and education to be one of its most important and permanent priorities. It wants to create a society where education will form the source of the long-term prosperity of Slovakia, which will influence the position of Slovakia in Europe and the universal development of personality and usefulness of all citizens. The Government is aware of the fact that education directed towards moral values, social feeling and democracy is the basis of the stability of the society and one of the most effective instruments to prevent violence, crime and other negative phenomena.

The Government sees the decisive role of the State in stopping the decline and ensuring an upward conceptual development of training and education, as well as ensuring the equal accessibility of education. It will be the task of the State to create conditions for ensuring the quality of the training and education in equivalence with developed European countries. The Government is aware of the fact that these objectives cannot be achieved without the support of the society, trade unions and non-governmental organizations.

The Government will prepare a long-term conception of the development of training and education. In so doing, it is prepared to consider the comments and opinions of the most important political parties, regional representatives, employers, trade unions, teachers and parents to form the basis of the development of the educational system during the next 15 - 20 years, regardless of changes of government. Following this conception, the Government will prepare a new school law (training and education law).

The Government will guarantee the right of all citizens for training and education free of charge to the extent of their abilities to learn at least until they become capable of managing their own affairs on the labour market. It not only wants to provide the possibility of high school education for all citizens but also to permanently increase the number of university graduates. During the process, it wants to provide the pupils and students with catering, accommodation at reasonable prices and efficient aid in the form of scholarships. The Government views education as a life-long process, and therefore will create conditions for the development of further education.

The Government will make every effort to ensure that documents certifying the achieved level of education and ability to perform occupation are mutually recognized on the international level and enable our citizens to find their place on the European labour market that is just being

established. Independent school inspection will be re-established in order to achieve this goal and improve the quality of education.

The Government will gradually increase funds for schools using a GDP proportion that will be comparable with the EU Member States. It will adopt a financing law that will ensure prescriptive distribution of funds between individual schools. The preparation of the law will include a review of the existing system of financing non-state schools. The Government will ensure that the levels of financing of private, church and state schools are comparable. It will adopt measures to ensure the efficient utilization of funds in the educational system and their public control through school authorities. It will implement principles so that fees on parents or students will remain in the school or school facilities. It will prepare legislation concerning the state aid provided to those who study, especially children from socially weaker families. It will provide tax benefits for high schools and universities carrying out business activities, provided that the funds resulting from tax benefits will be used for the further development of education. It will monitor the acquisition of non-budget funds.

The Government considers it essential to create conditions for the improvement of the social position of teachers and school employees and stabilize their position by adopting a state (public) service law. It will prepare annual increases in their tariff salaries upon agreement with trade unions.

The Government will propose a loan fund for new teachers, wherein it will create motivation instruments for teachers who decide to enter into an agreement of permanent employment in the area of education. The Government will renew services traditionally provided to teachers by methodological centres in the past (including teachers at national minority schools), institutes and other establishments. It will review the current requirements of the professional and pedagogic ability of teachers in such a way that they comply with standard European criteria.

The Government will ensure the capacity of pre-school facilities to prepare children for entering the first class of the elementary school. In compliance with the long-term conception of public administration, the Government will propose that pre-school facilities and elementary schools come under the administration of local authorities. It will gradually introduce changes in the content of elementary education to increase emphasis on elementary knowledge, strengthen the creative abilities of pupils and improve the continuity between individual grades. It will strengthen the emphasis on out-of-school education and create better conditions for it, in order to protect the youth from harmful influences by developing their interests and creative abilities.

The Government will undertake an analysis of the high school network and start its rationalization, including a network of branches of training and study, taking into account regional and national needs and labour market stimuli. Based on results of the analysis, it will consider the possibility of the transfer of selected competencies to higher territorial and municipal units. It will give emphasis to the high quality of high school graduates and their transfer to practical work in order to reduce unemployment. It will adopt measures to improve the quality of final examinations and school-leaving examinations and further prepare for the standardization of education.

It will give special emphasis to the improvement of professional education and preparation of young workers. It will propose measures to strengthen the connection between apprentice training schools and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce and industry and trade

associations. It will provide an ultimate solution to the founder's position in relation to apprentice training schools and remove the existing duplicity with regard to the school financing law. It will prepare legislation concerning the conditions of establishment of integrated schools.

The goal of the Government as regards admittance to secondary schools and universities is to prevent corruption and to achieve closer linkage with basic and secondary education. It will adopt a comprehensive programme for the fostering of gifted and talented youth. It will adopt special measures concerning the training and education of disabled children.

The Government will guarantee the improvement of the educational level of citizens belonging to minorities to the nation-wide average and solve the problem of preparation of teachers for schools with teaching languages of minorities, theologians, and cultural and educational staff in minority languages by creating an appropriate institutional level within existing universities. It will renew the tradition of two-language school reports and two-language pedagogical documentation. The Government has an interest in the improving of teaching Slovak language and will support progressive methods of its teaching in schools with the Hungarian teaching language.

The Government will improve administration in schools, starting from the headmasters as the basic management unit. As a minimum, it will return financial and personnel powers to the school departments of district and regional authorities. Following the conception of public administration, it will prepare a proposal for the creation of local school authorities. It will strengthen the co-ordinating function of the Ministry of Education in relation to elementary and high schools and school facilities, including a special department of the Ministry responsible for minority, church and private schools. It will support closer contacts between the family and school.

The Government will create conditions for a gradual increase in the number of university students, without lowering the quality. It will strengthen academic freedom and the autonomy of universities by adopting an amendment to the universities law. Together with the representatives of the universities, it will prepare a conception of the further development of university education into the 21st century. In the realization plan for its ensurance, it will adopt measures to emphasize the quality of education, management and financing of universities. It implant a multi-resource system of financing as well as the enterprising of universities as non-profit organizations.

The Government will prepare a new universities law that will correspond with European parameters. The Government will support the strengthening of integrity of universities, reviewing and internationalization of the existing system of evaluation and accreditation and building specialized information systems. It will move towards a differentiation in universities including their internal diversification.

The Government will support the further development of post-graduate study. It will enforce the creation of better social conditions for studying, including the completion of student hostels. The Government will support sending citizens of the Slovak Republic to study abroad and the establishment of branches of foreign universities. The Government will assess the possibility of the establishment of a catholic university in co-operation with the Slovak Conference of Bishops.

C. Science and research

The Government confirms the autonomy and key position of science and technology in the realization of the aims of the economic and social policy by amendments to legislation, and assert a gradual increase in resources in such a way that the proportion of expenditure on science to the gross domestic product approximates the level achieved by the European union. Within the building of an infrastructure for education, science and technology, it supports the entrance of the SR into the trans-European computer network TEN 34 or TEN 155.

After discussions between specialists from universities, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, individual sectors and business spheres, it will prepare the Policy Conception in the Area of Science and Technology, in which it will state the national scientific priorities. The Government will codify the position of science by appropriate legislative amendments, conceptual and legislative reforms concerning the management of science and the position of its main elements, including a new Act on the Slovak Academy of Sciences. It will support the participation of prominent specialists in science and research in the pedagogical process at universities.

It will create more effective tools of support of science and technology (tax and custom system) with the aim to support also the creation of resources outside budget and their development. It will prepare a new model of financing for science and technology and submit the long-awaited act on the support of science and technology. The Government will undertake further construction of the Scientific and Technological Information Centre. It will support bilateral and multilateral international co-operation, especially participation of Slovakia into the 5th frame programme of the EU for science and technical development. It will use possibilities of science in the creation of strategic developmental studies for the needs of the society and fulfilling integration efforts of the Slovak Republic.

D. Youth and sports

Within the state youth policy, the Government will support the participation of the youth in the life of the society. It will create a governmental committee for youth as a space for co-ordination of the policy aimed at youth. It will improve the system of programmes supporting hobbies, development of international contacts, information and advisory services and work with unemployed young people, as well as on their protection against negative influences.

It will support the activities of children's and youth organizations on all levels, including international co-operation. It will submit a draft youth law as the basic norm of the relationship between the State and the young generation. The Government will submit a proposal for more efficient functioning of the Children and Youth Fund. It will place greater emphasis on preventing drug addiction, in co-operation with youth representatives. In addressing social problems, it will pay special attention to the social problems of young people.

The Government will support the expansion of compulsory and voluntary physical education at schools and the use of school buildings for out-of-school physical education. The policy of subsidies will be focused on those working with youth and operators of sports facilities. By an amendment to the tax law, it will allow greater activities of local administrations and sport clubs in the development of mass and recreational sport activities on the local level.

It will make every effort to introduce clear rules for supporting the amateur and professional sports, including a transparent system of financing. It will unambiguously define

fiscal charges from the operation of games and lotteries to be paid to the system of physical education. The results of the state sport representation are considered part of the culture of a modern society and an efficient delegate of Slovakia abroad. The Government will submit a Government Programme of the support of the development of physical education. The government supports the candidacy of Poprad-Tatry for the organisation of the Winter Olympic Games in 2006 in accordance with the conditions of the protection of nature.

E. Health care

The Government will guarantee general access and high quality of basic out-patient and hospital health care for all citizens. A quick and well prepared complex reform of the health system is its assumption.

The Government will incline its health care orientation toward prevention and early diagnostics. The extensive prevention and treatment of drug addiction are Government priorities. The Government will put the main stress on out-patient health care - especially primary out-patient care. It will therefore support out-patient forms of health care where possible. The Government will create prerequisites for the further development and financing of home health care.

The Government will create conditions for hospital care so that it respects the principles of efficient diagnostics and treatment according to which its extent and structure will be adapted. Part of the bed capacities will be changed to post-care facilities. Complicated and very expensive medical treatment will be provided by highly specialized facilities. The authorization of each health care workplace to provide health care will be precisely defined by the accreditation of health care facilities. The efficiency and quality of primary health care will be ensured by the application of standard diagnostic procedures and treatment.

As regards medicine policy, the Government will implement measures in the area of pricing and measures to prevent the uneconomical prescription and consumption of medicines. It will also create prerequisites for controlling the effects of alternative medicine.

In order to improve the health of the people, the Government will create conditions to ensure the fulfilment of tasks in the area of health protection and support.

As regards the organisation and management of health care, the Government will support the transfer of competencies and obligations to lower state administration bodies and municipal authorities. The methodological, professional, legislative and conceptual management of the sector will remain in the competence of the State.

The Government will take account of the different needs of the regions and support the active participation of professional associations and organizations and health insurance companies. The regions will function as relatively independent units.

The Government will ensure the equal position of state and non-state health care facilities.

The Government will create conditions for the preparation of legislation concerning the position of health care facilities that will allow the establishment of the institutional self-administration of these health care facilities and standards for non-profit health care facilities.

Based on the evaluation of the existing legislation, the Government will prepare amendments to the health care regulations. Economic regulations will be amended to put pressure on the health care activities towards economic behaviour.

As regards the privatization of health care facilities, the Government will only allow privatization that will serve as a means of improvement in the provision of health care. In the privatization, the Government will take into consideration the interests of the employees of health care facilities and those of municipalities.

The Government will ensure multi-resource financing of health care. The Government will create conditions for gradual improvement of the proportion of health care to GDP to reach the level of the countries of the European Union. As regards the financing of investment in the health care system, the Government will support the establishment of bank credit lines. In the placement of resources, the Government will assert the application of territorial, demographic and professional approaches. Where allowed by local conditions, it will support regulated competition between health care facilities under precisely defined conditions.

The Government will propose the establishment of a separate fund to independently finance health care that is extraordinarily financially demanding, wherein the state budget, health insurance companies and other institutions should participate.

As regards the system of mandatory basic health insurance, the Government will guarantee equally accessible basic health care of equal quality for all citizens. The effectiveness of health insurance will be further increased by gradual transfer to personal accounts.

Health care financing will be realized on the basis of mandatory health insurance, and the plurality of health insurance companies as equal public service non-profit institutions will be maintained.

The Government will review and control the observance of the criteria of the establishment of health insurance companies and their operation and enforce their efficient financial management. The Government will ensure a more efficient control system of financial flows in health insurance companies and assert the participation of the state in the administrative bodies of health insurance companies.

The Government will support the establishment of contractual health insurance and additional insurance and the development of supplementary health insurance.

The Government will propose favourable tax treatment for entities that protect and support the health of their employees.

The Government will support human resource development and enforce a change in the evaluation of the work of the medical staff and differentiated remuneration according to their performance and abilities. The Government will create conditions for better professional and financial evaluation of highly qualified health service employees performing high-quality work.

The Government will ensure the system of under and post-graduate education of health service staff the results of which will be comparable with the level of professional expertise in EU Member States.

F. Culture

The Government gives special emphasis to the importance of culture, especially at the present time, as an important factor of communication between people and the bearer of the social functions, ethical standards and aesthetic values and habits. The Government understands the culture as a mean and target of the development of spiritual life of citizens. Historical experience and the current creative potential unanimously prove the high ability of Slovakia to take a significant place within the European context especially through its cultural identity.

The Government will ensure the right of citizens to culture, the accessibility of culture to the entire population and create conditions for the creative self-realization of all citizens.

The Government will develop culture in a democratic environment, maintain and support its variety, plurality of opinions, institutions and economic relationships in the professional, non-professional, state and non-state spheres.

The Government will ensure conditions for the freedom of artistic creation and scientific research and the right to dissemination of their results. It will liberate culture from ideological influence and the interests of political parties.

The Government will create conditions for the multi-resource financing of culture within the framework of state, municipal and private sectors.

The Government will review current legislation and create an appropriate legislative environment for the development of culture and protection of its values.

The Government will renew the dialogue with the cultural community that will stimulate changes in the area of culture. It will extend the co-operation with artistic and professional organizations and the third sector.

The Government pledges itself to harmonic co-operation with registered churches and religious associations, and will strive to implement a qualitatively new legal regulation of the relationship with these organizations.

The Government will ensure conditions for spreading knowledge of the cultural heritage, protecting it and making it accessible, including traditional and folk culture and the culture of minorities. It will ensure the maintenance of collection funds owned by the state and create conditions for their protection and replenishment.

The Government will create a natural environment for the respectable position and operation of the national cultural institutions.

The Government will ensure the protection and development of the state language.

In order to fulfil the citizens' constitutional right to information and education, the Government will ensure conditions for the functioning of the library system of the Slovak Republic.

The Government will give permanent attention to cultural and educational activities.

The Government will create conditions for the transparency of the media environment and development of economic competition on the media market in order to fulfil the citizens' right to freedom of speech and information. It perceives the mass media plurality not only in political but also in social and esthetic meanings.

The Government will give emphasis to the completion of a balanced dual system of radio and television broadcasting with coverage over the entire territory of the Slovak Republic, and to the further development of regional media.

The Government will create conditions for broadcasting in languages of national minorities in the Slovak Television and the Slovak Radio.

The Government will adhere to the principle of transparency and public control in all areas of culture. It will prepare clear rules for the financing of culture and cultural institutions, and publish the basis systematic measures and financial management of the funds and property of the State.

The Government will use legal and economic instruments to ensure democratic principles in the activities of the State Cultural Fund Pro Slovakia.

The Government will ensure the decentralization and transfer of competencies in the area of culture. The Government will remain the guarantor of democratic principles in the existence and development of culture on central, regional and local levels.

The Government will ensure the legal and professional independence of institutions in the area of culture. In staffing executive position in state cultural institutions, it will enforce the application of professional competence. It will review the situation in state cultural establishments, especially regional cultural centres and national methodological centres and cultural institutions of national minorities.

The Government will ensure universal conditions for the equal development of national minorities and ethnic groups and adopt new principles of their support, including the preparation of an Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups. The Government will create a department of cultures of national minorities, ensure subjectivity of cultural institutions and review the financing of professional theatres of Hungarian and Romany minorities to the level of other theatres in Slovakia.

It will pay permanent attention to the position of Slovak communities abroad and support projects of their development.

The Government will support cultural programmes for disabled and socially handicapped citizens and groups.

The Government will support artistic education, production for children and youth and original production.

The Government will support significant international projects in the area of culture carried out on the territory of the Slovak Republic.

The Government will support the presentation of Slovak culture abroad, and the exchange of cultural values and participation of Slovakia in international non-governmental organizations. It will develop existing treaties and enter into new cultural agreements with foreign countries, especially European countries. Cultural activities will form an important part of the national and state representation of the Slovak Republic.

4. Domestic security, justice, national defence and foreign policy

A. Domestic security and public administration

The Government will present a complex programme for the fight against crime, giving special emphasis to organized crime, corruption, tax evasion, drug crimes, child pornography, trading in women and theft of motor vehicles. It considers it necessary to consistently clear the state machinery of persons connected with organized crime.

The Government will prepare and realize a project for suppressing organized crime. It will establish special department for fighting organized crime, including a special analytical workplace. It will establish a special department for the investigation of extraordinarily serious criminal acts, especially organized crime.

Within the framework of the re-codification of the criminal law, special procedural rules will be introduced to fight against organized crime, and the range of legal evidence and preparatory proceedings will be adjusted to make them simpler and faster, the position of wronged persons and victims of criminal acts will be strengthened, and the protection of witnesses, experts and criminal prosecution bodies will be improved.

Intelligence services must play a more important role in fighting organized crime in accordance with the laws regulating their activities. The Government will adopt measures to review the reasons why the investigation of recent extraordinarily serious criminal acts has been suspended, to clear up these cases and arrest the offenders.

Police co-operation with foreign countries will be intensified. The Government will create mechanisms to prevent the infiltration of criminal groups and their activities onto the territory of the Slovak Republic. It will co-ordinate efforts aimed at the improvement of the protection of the state border with neighbouring states. It will assess the contractual basis of visa-free relationships, in order to prevent illegal crossing of the state border and the threatening migration waves through our territory.

The Government will consistently fight against all forms of crime, especially economic criminal acts. This will be ensured by closer co-operation between the financial police and the system of financial authorities, improvement of financial reports and intensifying international co-operation. After the fulfilment of necessary conditions, the Slovak Republic will accede to the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Searching, Arresting and Confiscation of Profits from Criminal Activities, of 1990. The Government will enforce fast adoption of amendments to the Act relating to the Fight against the Legalization of Income from the Most Serious, Especially Organized Forms of Criminal Activities.

The Government will take the necessary steps towards the improvement of the safety of citizens, especially of the most endangered groups. Specialized police workplaces will be established to solve the problem of juvenile delinquency and criminal acts committed against the youth. The Government will enforce the efficient control of anti-social behaviour of socially non-adapted citizens. It will assess the legal possibilities of the creation of a Recidivist Supervision Institute. It will prevent demonstrations of intolerance, xenophobia and racially motivated attacks.

The Government will assess and propose the adoption of more efficient legislative measures to suppress corruption in society. The interests of a state founded on the rule of law require that attention be paid to possible corruption of criminal authorities. The project of

suppressing corruption in the Police Force will help eliminate negative consequences of this phenomenon.

Following the re-codification of criminal legislation, the Government will prepare a new Act on the Police Force. It will renew the legal status and competencies of the President of the Police Force.

The Government considers it necessary to make corrections in the structures of the Police Force. The stabilization of the organisational structures and personnel will be supported by the introduction of career promotion for police officers. The process of stabilization will include strengthening the performance of the police service. Changes introduced to the training and education of police will aim at making the sectoral school system contribute more efficiently to the formation of highly qualified officers. The Government will remove deficiencies of the Act on State Service in order to improve the prestige of the police service and increase the security of policemen.

The Government will completely assess the competencies and level of co-operation between the Police Force, the Slovak Intelligence Service, the Railway Police, the Army Police, the Army of the Slovak Republic, the Prison and Justice Guard Corps of the Slovak Republic, and municipal police departments. Emphasis will be given to the precise definition of these competencies and to making their mutual co-operation more efficient. It will prepare and propose the harmonization of the content of legal regulations in this area. It is an important task to perform an analysis and assess the possibilities of transferring the activities performed by the Police Force beyond the framework of its duties to other bodies.

The Government considers it to be one of the main priorities of the building of the activities of the Police Force to gradually remove the deficit in its financing and improve its material and technological equipment.

The aim of mutual communication between the police and the entire Interior Ministry and the mass media and the public is to break the barrier of distrust and remove the feeling of fear of the police activities. The Government also wants to activate citizens, in order to increase their own responsibility for the protection of their lives, health and property by legal means.

The Government will enforce consistent prevention against crime. It will adopt the crime prevention strategy by 2002.

Based on the political and economical situation, the Government will address the optimal arrangement of the public administration in such a way that it ensures the basic needs of citizens. This will require continuing to decentralize the responsibilities of the State to lower levels of the public administration while respecting the subsidiarity principle. The Government will direct this process with a view to the overall performance of the economy in such a way that decentralized tasks are appropriately ensured using financial resources.

The Government will ensure the ratification of the European Charter of Local Administration, together with the necessary extent of obligations, and will also deal with the possibilities of the implementation of other provisions of the Charter in national legislation. Based on the analysis and in accordance with the principles of the above Charter, the Government will realize further decentralization of the competencies of local state administration bodies to territorial administration bodies and prepared regional administration authorities.

Following the transfer of competencies to territorial authorities, the problem of their financial independence will be solved in order in increasing and determining stable financial resources and flows in such a way that state intervention through the system of appropriations is limited in favour of the financial independence of municipalities.

The Government will assess the need to amend the Act on Territorial and Administration Arrangement of the Slovak Republic.

In accordance with the European Framework Convention on Cross-border Co-operation between territorial units or authorities and the Supplementary Protocol to this Convention, the Government will propose to neighbouring states that international agreements be concluded, regulating the forms and extent to which local and state authorities can develop cross-border co-operation.

The Government will enforce the consistent observance of the law in dealings between the authorities and citizens. New records of the population of the Slovak Republic will create prerequisites for the simplification of the procedure of dealing with the citizens' affairs and the transfer of certain administrative records from the Police Force to the competence of local administration will allow the providing of more complex services to individuals and legal entities.

The Government will prepare a long-term of support of providing the society with information by using the latest information and communication technologies and will give strategic aims and interests of the state.

The Government will make the state administration performance closer to citizens. It will treat the flow of information in the state administration by building the GOVNET governmental data network, which will make sharing of information in all spheres and at all levels of the state administration possible.

The Government will create conditions for the improvement of the professional level of the public administration staff and their systematic training and education.

It is one of the further tasks of the Government to consistently fulfil contractual obligations in the administration of state borders in accordance with the Constitution and international treaties concluded by and binding for the Slovak Republic.

The Government will create conditions for more efficient international co-operation in dealing with emergencies and improvement of preventive measures. It will ensure that the Act on the Integrated Rescue System is adopted.

The Government will give attention to the improvement of the administration of the Fire Protection Corps and its material and technological equipment. It will prepare a complex of draft legislation on fire protection.

The Government will carry out a migration policy in accordance with the procedures of the European Union. In this area, will create conditions for the accession to the European Union.

For the purpose of integration in European structures, the Government will also create conditions to ensure the compatibility of the system of protection of secret information.

B. Justice

It will be the aim of the Government to create the necessary conditions for the actual application of the constitutional law on an independent and impartial judiciary. For this purpose, measures will be adopted aiming at the observance of the principle that it is prohibited to withdraw a legally appointed judge from a case. The guarantees of the independence of judges will be increased, primarily by the cancellation of two-stage elections of judges and determination of legal conditions for the selection of candidates for apprentice judges and judges, including an increase of the age limit necessary for the position of a judge. The protection of judges and members of their family will be guaranteed, as well as an appropriate social and pension scheme for judges. In order to separate the performance of the judiciary from the state administration, new forms of judicial administration will be tested, including the enlargement both of the judges' decisive powers and responsibilities. Disciplinary liability of judges will also be strengthened, especially in the event of unsubstantial inactivity in their behaviour and improper behaviour of judges. In the case corruption and abuse of power, there will be no hesitation to file the criminal proceeding, waiting for the stand point of judge self administration.

The right to fast and efficient court protection will also be strengthened by further legal regulations that will simplify and abridge judicial proceedings and deepen the adversary principle of judicial proceedings. Other possibilities of the out-of-court settlement of disputes will also be reviewed. By introducing the institution of a higher court clerk, judges will be relieved from technical acts and will be able to fully concentrate of judicial and decision-making activities. Amendments to the system of court fees and the mechanism of legal aid will make the judiciary accessible to socially weaker citizens.

The improvement of the accessibility of the judiciary will also be performed by further stages of the gradual adaptation of the district court seats to newly-established districts.

The access to the Commercial Register will be simplified and proceedings in these matters will also be sped up by the establishment of a Central Commercial Register and Collection of Instruments in the Commercial Register. Bankruptcy and settlement proceedings will be made more efficient so that it may become an effective tool for the settlement of property claims against bankrupts and satisfaction of their creditors, including small creditors with last classification claims.

The current ambiguous position of the state attorney's office will be reviewed to strengthen the role of procurators and bodies responsible for legal protection. In order to strengthen the rights of citizens and in connection with the expected amendments to the Constitution, the Government will consider the establishment of the institute of a defender of civil rights (ombudsman).

The Government will enforce a further personnel and organisational stabilization of the Prison and Justice Guard Corps in order to fulfil its purpose which, as provided by relevant legislation, ensures the tasks of penology in cases of imprisonment and prison sentence. Special attention will be given to the professional preparation of new members of the Corps.

Considering the unfavourable development of the crime rate, differentiated tightening of the regime in prisons for convicts placed in the second-grade or third-grade penitentiaries will be considered. The accused will be provided the necessary legal and social aid. In dealing with convicts, their consistent re-socialization will be performed in connection with education, professional training and creation of the conditions for putting them as much as possible to work.

Based on the possibilities provided by the state budget, existing prisons will be modernized and new ones may be built, as well as in-house production facilities for the employment of convicts.

Increased attention will be given to safety in penal institutes, reformatory institutions, protection of courts and protection of witnesses if they are placed in this system during the imprisonment.

C. National defence

The Government will enforce an optimal variant of guaranteeing the security by struggling to become a full NATO member. The fulfilment of this aim will find its concrete expression in the internal and foreign policy of the Government. For this purpose, it will prepare a complex security and defence strategy and a conception of the reform of the armed forces. The Government will prepare and submit constitutional acts on security and defence, acts on ensuring the defence and armed forces and other legal norms that will precisely define the activities of the state bodies in fulfilment of the fundamental aim of national defence, i.e., ensuring its sovereignty and territorial unit.

The Government will continue to fulfil the aims of the strengthened Partnership for Peace, develop mutually advantageous multilateral and bilateral Co-operation between the armed forces of the Slovak Republic and armed forces of the developed democratic states. It will support peace, humanitarian and rescue operations of the United Nations Organisation, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, NATO and the Western European Union by active participation of its armed forces, and will share in the realizing the programme of establishing an armed forces joint brigade from the countries of Central Europe.

It will introduce the system of defence planning using experiences of developed democratic states. It will extend and intensify the control of the efficient utilization of resources committed to defence, and will also support the limitation of expenses in areas of the defence sector that are not directly connected with its main mission. It will ensure an interannual increase of the state expenses for defence by 0.1% of GDP.

The Government will adapt the structure, organisation and number of management bodies of the defence sector to the new requirements. It will arrange the relationships and competencies between the Defence Ministry and the General Staff of the Army of the Slovak Republic.

The Government will carry out the reform of the armed forces, continue their modernization and the establishment of units capable of autonomous action. It will make the structure of the ranks of armed forces more efficient and create ground forces and air force. It will reduce the number of members of the Army of the Slovak Republic with the perspective of a gradual increase in professionalism and reduction of the basic military service to nine months. The Government will adopt measures to gradually improve the quality and intensity of military training. It will prepare and realize another stage of the reform of military schools with special emphasis given to the improvement of the quality of the system of military education. It will support the strengthening of the role of parliamentary bodies within this system and establish an institute for the preparation of highly qualified experts in the area of security, defence and crisis management. It will form an institute for preparing highly qualified specialists in the area of security, defence and crisis management. It will stimulate the development and enforcement of

new trends in the military thinking. It will speed up the introduction of the human resource management in the armed forces.

The Government of the Slovak Republic will take appropriate measures to allow the Ministry of Defence to co-ordinate a priority position in the defence industry.

It will assess the contractual obligations of the state and defence sector and enforce the diversification of the international connections of the Slovak Republic in the area of the armaments industry and the weapons and military equipment trade, with special emphasis given to the EU and NATO Member States.

The Government will ensure the completion of the system of democratic control of the armed forces and preserve a non-partisan, politically neutral position.

The Government will improve the system of financial, health and social security of soldiers and civil employees, improve the living conditions of soldiers doing the basic military service, including the improvement of the housing situation of professional soldiers.

D. Foreign policy

The Government will carry out a modern, credible and cogent foreign policy, where the enforcement of the interest of the state and citizens of the Slovak Republic, strengthening their security, ensuring prosperity and better quality of life will represent the main principle. The Government considers it natural to maintain the continuity of foreign policy priorities from the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic, and is prepared to follow up all positive achievements in this area.

As regards its activities, the Government has decided to achieve the unity and interconnections between domestic and foreign policy. The renewal and maintenance of credibility on the international scene form an extraordinarily important part of the purposeful process of the construction and enforcement of the statehood of the independent Slovak Republic. By its foreign policy, the Government will create all prerequisites for the Slovak Republic to be a standard democratic state and a stable element in the region.

The Government will give main emphasis to the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, wherein Slovakia has found itself in a position that does not correspond to its potential. Slovak foreign and security policy will be based on the fact that the preservation of the identity, sovereignty, external security and favourable conditions for the economic development of the Slovak Republic are only possible within the framework of European and Transatlantic integration structures.

Membership of the European Union (EU) is a strategic aim and one of the most important political and economic priorities of the Slovak Republic. In order to achieve this aim, the Government will fulfil the political criteria as soon as possible, and undertakes to fulfil other criteria set by the Copenhagen EU Summit and resolutions of the joint bodies of the Slovak Republic and the European Union to place the Slovak Republic among the best prepared candidate countries. Primary attention will be given to the realization of the European Association Agreement and intensification of the pre-accession preparation based on the Accession Partnership and the National Programme of the Adoption of Acquis Communautaire. The Government of the Slovak Republic will ensure conditions for a more efficient and more

transparent utilization of the funds of the PHARE Program and other programmes of the European Union. In order to coordinate pre-accession activities of the Slovak Republic, efficient institutional connections between state administration bodies will be established and strengthened. In the dialogue with the European Union, the Government will consistently consider the interest of Slovakia and improve informational and educational activities in order to provide detailed information to the public about the facts relating to the European Union membership of the Slovak Republic.

In the area of foreign and security policy, the achievement of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) membership of the Slovak Republic as soon as possible is a strategic priority. The Government of the Slovak Republic will adopt the necessary measures of its internal and foreign policy with the aim to integrate the Slovak Republic into the NATO collective security system. The Government will use all possibilities of approximation to NATO through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace Programme and other forms of Co-operation with the NATO Member States.

It will be a permanent task of the Government to support and strengthen the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as an important instrument of preventative diplomacy and a solution to crisis situations. Together with the developed democratic states, the Slovak Republic wants to contribute to the sustaining of stability in the Euro-Atlantic zone. Certain elements of co-operative security will also be used for the strengthening of the security of the Slovak Republic.

Within the framework of the integration process, the possibilities for closer Co-operation with the Western European Union will be used, including the procedure for solving situations of crisis and humanitarian and rescue operations. The Government considers as important the SR participation in the project "Central European Countries' Co-operation for Support of Peace" (CENCOOP).

As regards disarmament, control of armaments and prevention of the distribution of weapons of mass destruction, the Government will give emphasis to the fulfilment of the obligations accepted by the Slovak Republic, make the mechanism of their observance more efficient and adopt the necessary legislative measures.

The Government confirms its determination to implement the standards of the Council of Europe and will support the intensification of the Co-operation between the Council of Europe and other international organizations. The Government will support the signing of the Regional and Minority Language Charter.

In order to integrate the Slovak Republic among the most economically advanced countries of the world, the Government will take the necessary steps towards the early fulfilment of the political, legislative and economic conditions of Slovakia's membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

It will be a permanent priority of the foreign policy to develop good relationships with neighbouring countries. The Government will make use of all possibilities to intensify the contacts with the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, and is prepared to actively participate in the revival and development of the Visegrad Co-operation. The Government will give special emphasis to the development of mutual relations with Austria, the only EU Member State that borders on the Slovak Republic. Permanent attention will be given to the development of relations with Ukraine, our largest neighbour.

As regards bilateral relations, the Government will, based on its strategic priorities, concentrate on the all-round development of contacts with all the EU and NATO Member States and other advanced democracies, giving emphasis to traditional connections and key partners. In this context, the Government is interested in renewing the partner dialogue and achieving a higher quality of relations with the USA.

The Government will develop correct relations with the countries of the Community of Independent States and maintain balanced relations with the Russian Federation, which is one of the most important economic partners of the Slovak Republic.

Greater attention will be paid to the development of relations with the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Government will focus on the most important countries of these continents and the states that provide possibilities for advantageous commercial and economic Co-operation.

In the area of multilateral diplomacy, the Slovak Republic will actively participate in international organizations, especially in the United Nations Organisation. The Government has confirmed its interest in gaining for the SR a seat as a permanent member of the UN Security Council for the period 2001-2002. Furthermore, it will actively share in the activities of specialised UN agencies. The Slovak Republic is prepared to join in the efforts of the international community for the solution of global problems such as the fight against organized crime, international terrorism and the crisis in the ecology. As a concrete example, it will actively participate in international peacekeeping operations for the prevention of conflicts and for the safeguarding of peace. The government will prepare a Conception of international development aid with the goal of contributing by its work to the effort of developed countries to reduce the problem of famine and poverty in the least developed countries.

With the goal of supporting the economic interest of Slovakia, the government will emphasize the economic dimension of foreign relations and will act in international economic organizations on a global level, particularly within the World Trade Organisation. On a regional level, its activities will be primarily aimed at the development of Co-operation within the CEFTA Agreement, the Central European Initiative and others, which it sees as a complementary part of the integration processes. As an important form of development of regional links, the government considers cross-border Co-operation within Euro-regions and in this context expresses its readiness to sign appropriate international documents.

The Government of the Slovak Republic considers nationality and ethnic diversity as a historic given and an enriching element and condemns all demonstrations of ethnic and racial intolerance. In fulfilling its foreign policy, attention will be continuously paid to issues of a human dimension. It will actively join in the formation of an international norms system in the area of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. The Government will address the completion of domestic legal norms in this area, in harmony with international obligations, and guarantees their constant upholding in practice. The Government will support homeland communities abroad and extend relations with them on all levels.

In a view to the foreign policy priorities, economic interests and cultural and historic links of the Slovak Republic, it will regularly update and complete the system of bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Among the domestic priorities in the area of foreign policy is the professionalization and stabilization of the foreign service as well as the accomplishment of systems of the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and a network of Representative Offices with a view to long-term foreign policy priorities. The Government will prepare a legislative framework for ensuring the effective activity of the foreign service.

A necessary condition for ensuring the performance of the foreign policy of the state as a whole is co-ordination and harmonization of the foreign policy activities of the SR National Council and the Slovak President, as well as the government and state administration bodies, in respecting the principles of responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the achievement of this goal. The Government will create effective mechanisms for motivating the potential of non-governmental, scientific and academic institutions towards the creation of foreign policy.

A system of measures for the achievement of a unified performance of the foreign service will be accomplished through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will orient its foreign policy to the support of development of economic relations with other countries in the interest of further growth of the SR economy and a rise in the living standard of its inhabitants.

V. CONCLUSION

In the elections for the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 1998, the citizens of the Slovak Republic expressed their wish that society be changed fundamentally. The Government of the Slovak Republic is determined to realize this change. This change is conditional upon a new climate in society, dominated by tolerance, mutual respect and honouring basic civil and human rights. This positive climate is conditional upon a new quality of relationship between the governing coalition and the opposition. The Government of the Slovak Republic guarantees that it will respect the findings of the Constitutional Court and ensure all conditions for the opposition in the proper performance of its control function, and that it will be prepared to confront its own positions in an open discussion with the opposition. The Government is aware of its responsibility for the future development of the country, and is also aware of the fact that the opposition is also an inseparable part of the picture of the country. This is why the Government of the Slovak Republic invites the opposition to a new and permanent dialogue, where the Government will not only talk but also show the willingness to listen. We are prepared for control and polemics, as well as harsh criticism. It is our wish that our dialogue fulfil the parameters we want to see in the relationships among citizens. Let our mutual dialogue be dominated by the effort to offer the best possible solutions. The Government of the Slovak Republic invites the opposition to a new type of dialogue.

Many challenges are facing the Government of the Slovak Republic. These challenges include finding solutions to many burning problems. The times and the approaching new millennium have brought about these challenges. The Government of the Slovak Republic is determined to accept these challenges. It is aware of the fact that it is the Government of all the citizens of the Slovak Republic, not only of the voters of four political parties. This is why it invites all the citizens of the Slovak Republic to co-operate and participate in our joint programme. It invites everyone who wishes Slovakia a better future to co-operate in the process of national restoration. The Government of the Slovak Republic will make every effort to ensure that Slovakia is at the start of the third millennium a politically and economically stable country with dynamic developments, dominated by hope and having sufficient reasons for optimism and good prospects.

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The National Council of the Slovak Republic issued the Resolution of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of 2nd December 1998 approving the Programme Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic and decided on vote of confidence to the Government of the Slovak Republic.